

Durham Research Online

Deposited in DRO:

01 September 2009

Version of attached file:

Published Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Nesbitt, C. (2007) 'Book review of 'Dynamic Splendour. The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufraius at Porec : Volume 1 and 2' by A. Terry and H. Maguire, Pennsylvania : The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.', Classical review., 59 (1). pp. 252-253.

Further information on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0009840X0800276X>

Publisher's copyright statement:

Additional information:

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in DRO
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full DRO policy](#) for further details.

SOME SIXTH-CENTURY MOSAICS

TERRY (A.), MAGUIRE (H.) *Dynamic Splendour. The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Porec*. Volume 1: Text. Pp. xiv + 224. Volume 2: Illustrations. Pp. xiv + 205, b/w & colour ills. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007. Cased, US\$95. ISBN: 978-0-271-02873-6.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X0800276X

This beautifully produced two-volume set presents the results of a decade of painstaking fieldwork and research on the sixth-century Cathedral of Eufrasius at Porec. Volume 1, the text, sets out the history of the complex before the nineteenth century and the methodologies of the late nineteenth-century restoration project, before going on to compare the Eufrasiana with its contemporary ecclesiastical sites across the Adriatic in Ravenna. Following this are chapters focussing on the artistry of the sixth-century mosaics and the iconographic and iconologic content of the images. Volume 2 presents high-quality images of the mosaics together with plans and aerial photographs which allow the reader an exceptional familiarity with, and understanding of, the site.

T. and M. introduce the subject with a comprehensive historiography of the Eufrasiana up to the nineteenth century and outline the problems faced by early scholars in examining the mosaics from floor level, in poor lighting and before any cleaning had taken place. This is followed by a discussion of the philosophy and methodologies underpinning the various phases of restoration in the church and their respective successes and failures. This chapter is thought-provoking, raising questions about the preservation of original artwork versus a continuation of the life of the monument and ownership of the contemporary viewer. Changes to the building, its furnishing and decoration from the mid eighteenth century are discussed here; however the nineteenth-century Italian master Bornia's restoration of the mosaic, as the most successful and most recent, is considered in greatest detail. The authors have painstakingly compared the wealth of literature documenting the late nineteenth-century restoration with the physical reality of the changes, revealing some of Bornia's *ad hoc* changes of plan in the name of art. The attention to detail in the analysis and description of the physical properties of the tesserae and their arrangement, supported by colour images, elucidate the subject very well; the reader is able to compare visually the original mosaic work with the later restoration rather than taking it on faith as is often the case in reports of this nature.

This publication is a very good synthesis of the ethical and practical problems of mosaic restoration; the Eufrasiana could easily be viewed as a case study for the pros and cons of restoration. Discussion centres on the issue of honest restoration as opposed to what might be termed invisible restoration, which attempts to preserve the original appearance as a unified whole, rather than leaving a palimpsest of changes that can be read in the finished work. T. and M. tread honestly but delicately through what remains a contentious subject.

T. and M. then move on to consider comparanda for the Eufrasiana in an attempt to establish stylistic parallels, the obvious example being Ravenna. The cathedral is dated to the sixth century through parallels with other sixth-century ecclesiastical complexes. The authors find similarities between the mosaic borders and backgrounds in the semi-dome of the Eufrasiana and those in the Arian Baptistry; these two structures share a certain symmetry in the arrangement of the clothing in

depictions of the apostles. Further parallels are found in San Vitale between the facial features of Maximian and those of Eufrasius and Claudius in Porec. T. and M. also demonstrate that the Eufrasiana shares concepts of materiality with San Apollinaire in Classe and San Apollinaire Nuovo, as all three churches use mother of pearl, apparently strategically, in their mosaics. These concepts of materiality are picked up in Chapter 4 as the mosaic artistry of the sixth century at Porec is considered; the hierarchical use of materials is discussed, from precious opalescent glass tesserae depicting the face of Eufrasius in the donor portrait, to the limestone cubes adorning the more peripheral parts of the images. This chapter deals specifically with the logistics of installing the mosaic programme at Porec, but could easily represent sixth-century mosaic art more generally; it considers all aspects of the process from design through drawings, paintings and setting teams to the consideration of the interaction between light, colour and texture in the mosaic that offers another definition of dynamism in the Dynamic Splendour. Through a combination of consultation of the historical documents relating to the restoration, close examination of the setting beds and tesserae, and a consideration of the iconographic meaning and parallels for these images, the authors systematically qualify the authenticity of the hitherto debated aspects of the mosaic programme. The ability to examine the mosaics at such close quarters has allowed T. and M. finally to put to rest doubts about which images are reconstructions and which preserve their original appearance and iconography.

An interpretation of the images follows, this time considered in terms of their iconology. Here the content of the mosaics is discussed and parallels are drawn with contemporary art in major centres such as Thessalonike and Rome. This discussion raises interesting questions about the manufacture and supply of materials at Parentium and indeed the distribution of these materials within the cathedral, particularly in terms of the hierarchical use of materials considered earlier in the text. It is argued that a tripartite programme can be identified in the complex messages contained within the images, seeing aspects of doctrine, politics and private petition forming individual parts of a harmonious whole. The discussion of the iconology locates the Eufrasiana firmly in the sixth century, framing it in the context of the religious and socio-political climate of the time. The two volumes provide a rigorous and detailed yet accessible discussion of the Eufrasiana; two appendices complement the text with a comprehensive account of the early restorations and the twentieth-century interventions. These volumes will be invaluable to researchers and students alike.

Durham University

CLAIRE NESBITT
claire.nesbitt@durham.ac.uk

VELEIA

CRINITI (N.) (ed.) *'Veleiates'. Uomini, luoghi e memorie dell'Appennino piacentino-parmense*. Pp. 338, ills, maps. Parma: Monte Università Parma Editore, 2007. Paper, €16. ISBN: 978-88-7847-152-8. doi:10.1017/S0009840X08002771

For over twenty years Nicola Criniti has been co-ordinating at Parma University important researches into the small Appennine town of Veleia and the *tabula alimentaria* found there in 1747 (*CIL* XI.1147 = *ILS* 6675). The results can be